



Snohomish County
Planning and Development
Services

Visit us at :

2nd Floor Robert J. Drewel Bldg.
3000 Rockefeller Avenue
Everett, WA 98201

425-388-3311
1-800-562-4367, ext. 3311



ONLINE INFORMATION
www.snohomishcountywa.gov/1190



This Assistance Bulletin only applies to property within unincorporated Snohomish County and does not apply to property within incorporated city limits.

Grading Permits for Projects Vested Prior to September 30, 2010

Assistance Bulletin

#35

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Grading Information for Single Family Residences and Other Small Parcel Developments

This bulletin discusses the circumstances and activities that require an application for, and the issuance of, a grading permit in Snohomish County. Section 30.63B.010 states that the purpose of the Grading Code is to “regulate grading in order to safeguard life, limb, property and the general welfare.” Consequently, all grading requires a grading permit unless it is exempted per Section 30.63B.020, (Exemptions). The information provided in this bulletin explains some of those exemptions and is based on Chapter 30.63B SCC.

Q: What are “impervious surfaces”?

A: “Impervious surfaces” are surfaces such as gravel and paved driveways and parking areas; rooftops, (including overhangs), sidewalks and covered patios and decks.

Q: What is “clearing”?

A: “Clearing” is the removal of small trees (less than 2 inches in diameter at breast height [DBH]) and shrubs without disturbing the surrounding soil. If you use a Bobcat or Bulldozer and put the blade into the soil, you are grading!

Q: What are “critical areas”?

A: “Critical areas” are streams, wetlands and buffers, (when recorded as part of a Native Growth Protection Area [NGPA] with the County Auditor); fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas; or geologically hazardous areas. For more information, please see PDS bulletin #15, Critical Areas Regulations.

Q: What is a “flood hazard area”?

A: A “flood hazard area” is defined by SCC 30.91F.370 as, “the land in the flood plain that is subject to a one percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year.” In general, this means the land included within the 100-year flood elevation. If you plan to grade in a flood hazard area, you will need a flood hazard permit, regardless of whether or not the grading itself is exempt from a grading permit.

Q: What is “grading”?

A: “Grading” is any excavating or filling or combination of both.

This bulletin is intended only as an information guide. The information may not be complete and is subject to change.
For complete legal information, refer to Snohomish County Code.

Q: What is “excavating”?

A: “Excavating” is defined by SCC 30.91E.120 as, “the mechanical removal of earth material.”

Q: What is “filling”?

A: “Filling” is defined by SCC 30.91F.210 (Fill) as, “a deposit of earth material placed by artificial means.”

Q: What are “earth materials”?

A: “Earth materials” are defined by SCC 30.91E.020 as, “any rock, natural soil or fill or any combination thereof.”

Q: What grading can I do without getting a permit?

A: You may move up to 100 cubic yards of earth materials, if your proposed grading (on your contiguously owned property):

- Occurs outside critical areas.
- Is at least 2 feet from a property line.
- Includes Temporary Erosion and Sediment Control measures, per 30.63A.220(1) SCC.
- Does not alter or obstruct a drainage course.

Provided the above conditions are met, you may, within any consecutive 24-month period:

- Remove small shrubs or bushes on 10,000 square feet of your lot, (assumes moving an average depth of 3 inches).
- Excavate earth materials from your property or import or relocate a total of NO MORE THAN 100 cubic yards of fill. Examples of this are landscaping or leveling out your yard, and installing a utility outside a critical area and outside a County right-of-way (as long as your grading does not add impervious surface).
- Maintain a utility outside a critical area and outside a County right-of-way as long as your grading does not add impervious surface and does not adversely impact critical areas, lakes or upstream or downstream properties.
- Resurface or maintain your driveway by adding gravel, as long as you do not lengthen or widen the driveway. Remember, a maintenance activity cannot increase the capacity of the facility being maintained.
- Fill in no more than 100 stump holes from trees greater than 8 inches DBH.
- Construct a 450-foot long x 12-foot wide x 6-inch deep driveway. If your driveway crosses a stream or wetland, you will need a grading permit. In addition, if your driveway and rooftops together create more than 5,000 square feet of new impervious surface, you will need a full drainage plan to mitigate the effects of any increased stormwater runoff.
- Excavate 500 cubic yards of earth materials from a basement or foundation for a single family residence or accessory building, provided that excess excavated material shall be disposed of backfill against the foundation within 20 feet of the building or to a permitted site approved by Snohomish County. Additionally, the excavation must commence after the building permit is secured. The grading must comply with the building permit. Make an Emergency Repair.* In an emergency, grading repairs may be undertaken without a prior grading permit or an associated drainage review to protect existing development, maintain an existing utility function or prevent channel impairment, if insufficient time exists to obtain a grading permit prior to the time necessary to perform the emergency repairs; and either:
 1. Damage is occurring as a result of flood waters at, or that flood waters are exceeding, flood stage, as defined by the Snohomish County Department of Emergency Services;
 2. Utility maintenance is necessary to repair a utility facility or line that has been damaged as a direct result of the emergency; or
 3. Removal and relocation of material relocated by floodwaters onto commercial farmland is necessary to protect farming operations.

Note: Contact PDS as soon as possible.

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* An emergency is defined by Chapter 17.05.020(4) as, “a situation which the director determines has developed suddenly, constitutes an imminent threat, and demands immediate action to protect property from damage by elements or to protect the public from a serious and imminent threat to health or safety.” The procedure for the director to determine whether or not an emergency situation exists will depend upon your ability to demonstrate that the above conditions are occurring. This is normally accomplished by having a Professional Engineer, licensed in the State of Washington, assess the situation and provide a letter explaining the findings of his/her assessment and requesting that the director assign an emergency status to the repair work. Once your letter requesting an emergency status has been reviewed and approved, and after your emergency repair is completed, you will need to apply for a grading permit.

Q: If I need a grading permit, what do I do?

A: Obtain a grading permit application packet. These packets are available from the Customer Support Center, 2nd Floor, Robert J. Drewel Building, 3000 Rockefeller, Everett, or online at www.snohomishcountywa.gov/1190. Applications for grading permits for Single Family Residences and other small parcel developments are submitted by visiting the Customer Support Center, 2nd Floor, Robert J. Drewel Building.

Q: What if I have other questions?

A: You can search online at www.snohomishcountywa.gov/1230 or call (425) 388-3311 and ask to speak to a Permit Technician or submit questions online at AskPermitTech@snoco.org. . Remember, asking questions first can save lots of time and money!